

Committee Service Recognition in Appointment, Promotion and Tenure

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Introduction

The history of faculty appointment, promotion, and tenure in America is connected to an ideology from the 1870's, when it was suggested that both teaching and research were mutually conducive and that one supports the other (Ryan, 2016, 1). Though faculty responsibilities include committee service as part of the teaching, research and service triad, committee service often does not rate as highly as teaching and research in appointment, promotion, and tenure (APT) decisions. Nevertheless, committee service is necessary within dental education institutions and ensures business workflows function correctly. They are vital to accomplishing university missions and provide opportunities to assess university goals. Lastly, university committees are largely operated by the school's faculty. And as faculty, the authors had questions regarding committee service and wanted faculty views on this topic.

An IRB permit 22-0566 was obtained from our institution through the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects.

A nine-question survey consisting of Likert-style and open-ended questions was delivered through the online survey method, Qualtrics, to 234 persons. Participants consisted of faculty.

The email with the link to the survey was sent a total of 4 times from 9/1/2022 to 9/21/2022.

The response rate was $n = 47.01\%$. The results of our study support the hypothesis that the culture of committee service at our institution can be improved. Many educators generously described situations that make it difficult for them to achieve the tasks of committee service commitments and offer suggestions for improvement. Solutions include having protected time for committee meetings either individually or as a faculty collectively, and ensuring equality in

work load. Educators also related their experiences as clinic faculty and discuss perceived differences between pre-clinic course faculty with those that have patient care duties.

Institutions interested in making improvements to their business operations, especially those that closely rely on faculty participation on committees, might consider review of the standing committees' time commitment, and faculty workload. Further study may also find ways to provide merit for excellence in service and place greater value of committee work in APT decisions. Lastly, institutional leaders might create a space where educators can voice their concerns on the topic of committee service and APT. Thereby, perhaps be in a better position to negotiate for fairness and more fluid and efficient university committee systems that utilize faculty for accomplishing committee tasks.

Key Words

Dental Education

Committee Service

Appointment Promotion and Tenure

The work of University faculty 'where knowledge is prized, pursued and shared' is well known as the effort of Teaching, Research, and Service to those invested in the academy. As such, it is central to higher education's value proposition (Farrell 2018, 1-3). Its continued success depends upon many factors such as how well Universities educate their student cohort. Meaning, achievement and attainment of graduation goals that continuously show positive results where indicated as an example. Or how well their research impacts the community either through scientific skill, NIH grant funding, or both. And how important or well-known the University

prevails or becomes through leadership and faculty achievement. Maintaining relevance in today's competitive academic environment requires that university leaders continue to appease investors such as elected officials, funding agencies, and the public who want measurable indicators of the institution's value.

This value, in large part, is faculty dependent and is measured by faculty product and its favorable outcome. Faculty accomplishment also depends on the value and recognition of their scholarly activity in quantifiable forms such as publication and/or research funding. In America, the University environment behaves as if teaching and research are mutually reinforcing activities (Ryan 2016, 1). An idea that dates back to the 1870s, when the then president of Harvard suggested the view that teaching and research are 'two sides of the same coin, part of a unified academic practice' (Ryan 2016, 1). In other words, teaching inspires new ideas regarding education and learning, and this can lead to research and, therefore, to elevated teaching. With this ideology, the integrationist research ideal, many research institutions practice equal weight for teaching and research performance in faculty evaluations (Ryan 2016, 1). But not necessarily for service.

However, many in the academy and the public have thought that University research does not add to but rather 'detracts' from teaching' (Ryan 2016, 1). Still, others suggest that not only are research and teaching different sets of skills, but they are also different activities and different approaches to knowledge, where 'teaching is interactive, private, personally constructed, and process-oriented, and research is specialized, public, and results-oriented' (Ryan 2016, 1).

Regardless of methods, ideologies, measuring, and valuing, there is still a value of service in faculty life that substantially supports the business side of assuring University missions and goals are accomplished. Committees are constructed to carry out the charges assigned to them by

University leaders for completing specific objectives and functions and making recommendations to the Institution.

Defining faculty service can be difficult and ‘complicates campuses’ approaches to recognizing and rewarding service contributions’ (Sheets 2018, 55). For many institutions this ‘only marginally factors into most promotion and tenure decisions.’ (Sheets 2018, 55).

Nevertheless, University business depends upon committee service as a ‘mechanism utilized to sustain and enact the principles of shared governance and academic quality’ (Sheets 2018, 55). These activities compete with the faculty’s time and are inversely related to teaching and research. This means that increased time spent on teaching and or research decreases the time allotted for that of service and vice-versa. Additionally, not all tasks nor are all committees equitable. Given the competing nature on faculty time for the measured and imperative duties of teaching and research, finding the non-measured, though still significant, service duty lacking in value is unsurprising.

To this end, the authors aimed to understand faculty experiences while serving on standing committees at our University to improve its educational mission and business operations. Additionally, to support faculty development.

The randomized response by faculty in this study illustrates a fair and reasonable representation of the perceived value placed on committee service or the lack thereof and supports our hypothesis.

Methods:

An IRB permit, HSC-DB-22-0566, was obtained from the Committee for the protection of human subjects.

A 10-question survey of multiple choice and open-ended questions was delivered to 234 UTHealth Houston School of Dentistry faculty through the online survey method Qualtrics. Participants consisted of faculty. The email with the link to the survey was sent four times from 9/1/2022 to 9/21/2022.

The study design was intended to gather responses from the study population comprehensively through the use of open-ended questions with a goal to capture whatever subject matter was not addressed in the query and give the opportunity for total free expression in an anonymous way.

Our open-ended data were not framed in the original Likert-style questions but captured outstanding subject matter and opinions. The data collected are valid and represent the institution.

The presented research illustrates results from faculty who volunteered to participate in the study and wished to opine on the committee service experience. Objective understanding of this data presents and proves our hypothesis that we must cultivate a path to ensure appreciation, recognition, and value for those who serve on committees. Strengthening the value of service as a vital component of faculty life serves faculty development and, therefore, the University. Its extension radiates far and wide by supporting University missions with a strong and committed faculty body.

Results:

The response rate was 47.01%. Results showed that faculty recommend protected time and recognition for committee service to support faculty development and University missions.

76.58% responded as Full-time Equivalent (FTE) paid faculty of 0.8 FTE or more. 17.12% of faculty responded as paid faculty of 0.3 – 0.8 FTE. 6.31% of faculty responded as part-time paid

faculty of 0.1 – 0.3 FTE. No response was received from non-paid/volunteer/adjunct/other types of faculty. Most faculty, 91.82%, serve on-site rather than off-site. (Figure 1.)

We asked faculty the number of committees they provide service for as a way to measure faculty workload. However, we did not correlate this to FTEs. Figure 2. Illustrates that most faculty serve on either 2 or 3 committees.

Figure 3 describes how often the study populations' committees meet.

Faculty response shows that the majority of committee meetings are scheduled as needed.

However, some committees meet quarterly, some once a month, or only annually.

As seen with these responses, there are significant differences in time commitment expectations for differing committees and their cohorts. A limitation of this study was that the amount of work per committee and amongst its members was not compared and measured.

We then asked faculty their perceptions of the work distribution within their committees and whether or not it was equitable.

Most faculty responded that the work distribution among committee members is equitable at 45.19%. However, many participants responded that this only occurs 27.88% of the time. 14.42% disagree and say the work is not distributed equally. Lastly, 12.50% are uncertain if committee tasks are distributed fairly.

In addition, we asked faculty how successful they are in attending committee meetings, 75%, 50%, 25%, or 0% of the time. Participants responded that the majority of faculty are able to attend 75% of the meetings at 88.35%, 6.08% are able to attend 50% of the meetings, 1.94% are

able to attend 25% of the meetings, and 2.91% of faculty are unable to attend any committee meetings.

Faculty were also asked why they could not attend committee meetings. (Figure 4).

55% of study participants responded that there are difficulties in attending committee meetings due to schedule conflicts and having multiple commitments. 26% say this is due to teaching commitments in the pre-doctoral clinic. 14% describe difficulties attending committees due to other reasons, and 5% are due to commitments teaching pre-clinic courses (Figure 4).

Since service on committees comprises the work necessary to keep the business of the University running smoothly, the authors asked faculty if they thought service on committees should be awarded. As seen in Figure 5, most faculty think committee service should be awarded at 61.32%, whereas 25.47% say maybe committee service should be awarded. And 13.21% feel there should not be an award.

As committee service is a part of the dental education triad, teaching, research, and service, the authors asked who should evaluate a faculty member's committee service. 54% of the study population responded that the committee chair and department chair should evaluate a faculty's effort as a committee member. 25% of participants agree that only the committee chair should provide an evaluation. 14% feel committee service should not be evaluated. Lastly, 7% think that only a department chair should be the one to evaluate a committee member's service efforts.

At our University, there is an annual Committee Members Activity report completed and submitted by committee chairs at the end of the fiscal year. We asked faculty if they were familiar with this report.

A large number of faculty, 47%, responded that they were unaware of the report. 11% agreed they were aware of the report but had not seen one. The remaining faculty, 43%, knew of this annual report. Given the necessity of completing this report annually, the authors have a curiosity about this practice, given that it is uncertain as to the value that service plays on promotion and tenure decisions within our institution.

Continuing, we asked the faculty for their suggestions for improving committee meeting attendance (Figure 6). Some recommendations are illustrated and include having a centralized calendar. Making accommodations for including remote access (hybrid) meetings. Still, others favor having protected office time. Many suggest not having meetings during lunch time. Interestingly, some faculty recommend placing value for committee service, which suggests there is a lacking in the study population. In addition, some participants suggest reducing the number of committees one serves on and limiting the frequency of the meetings. Other ideas are to Poll faculty for the best times to meet and publicize consistent meetings. Further, one study participant suggested adding days to their schedule or hiring additional faculty. Lastly, another response showed that as part-time faculty, they are not able to go to committee meetings once the semester changes due to schedule alterations in the curriculum.

Discussion

The faculty duties of teaching, research, and service are necessary parts of academia, though not weighted equally in APT decisions. An environment that does not support all of its members efforts creates a weak link. Our results show, faculty have many responsibilities that depend upon time availability. Raising the level of value for committee service by faculty should enhance the culture. In our study, faculty perception is that pre-clinic faculty have an advantage over clinical faculty for promotion. A cultural notion that says pre-clinic faculty have more time,

or are seen more, and therefore selected as when participants say that “advancing faculty development is important for clinicians as well as academicians”.

The authors interpret these responses to say that the experience of faculty is that the current committee structure favors academicians for career advancement due to a perception that non-clinic faculty's time availability supports more scholarly activity and, additional opportunities for growth.

These are important findings from our study that suggest that it is not only about faculty participation within their assigned committees, but also that of an institutional culture that may or may not have in existence, methods of support that acknowledge faculty work on committees that counts very positively towards promotion and tenure.

The purpose of this study was to gather faculty opinions of their experiences while serving on committees.

The results of our study confirm the hypothesis that a perception exists in the academic culture that is both inherent within the faculty body with regard to committee service, teaching duties and differences therein amongst clinic and non-clinic educators as it relates to APT. And a culture that perhaps originated in the 1870's that highly values teaching and research, but places less value on committee service. The results also show some of the scheduling difficulties that affect faculty's ability to attend to all their duties, which can eventually affect the work of committees and consequently university missions and goals. In order to alleviate the pressures within the academic culture, the authors suggest that Universities could consider securing equal opportunity for quality administrative protected time for all faculty. And consider new metrics to

recognize and value service not only for fairness in faculty governance but also faculty development.

The presented research illustrates results from faculty who volunteered to participate in the study and wished to opine on the committee service experience. Objective understanding of this data presents and proves our hypothesis that we must cultivate a path to ensure appreciation, recognition, and value for those who serve on committees. Strengthening the value of service in academia can become a strong feedback loop where faculty are supported and Universities flourish.

Conclusion:

Cultivating paths that ensure the continuous and highly valued function of committees is a significant finding in our study that aims to improve and modernize the culture of faculty life with regard to education, research, and particularly service. Dental schools might develop a method for appreciation and recognition of excellence in committee service, as it is a vital component of institutional support that ultimately leads to improved learning outcomes.

Data sharing not applicable to this article as no datasets were generated or analyzed during the current study.

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Disclosure:

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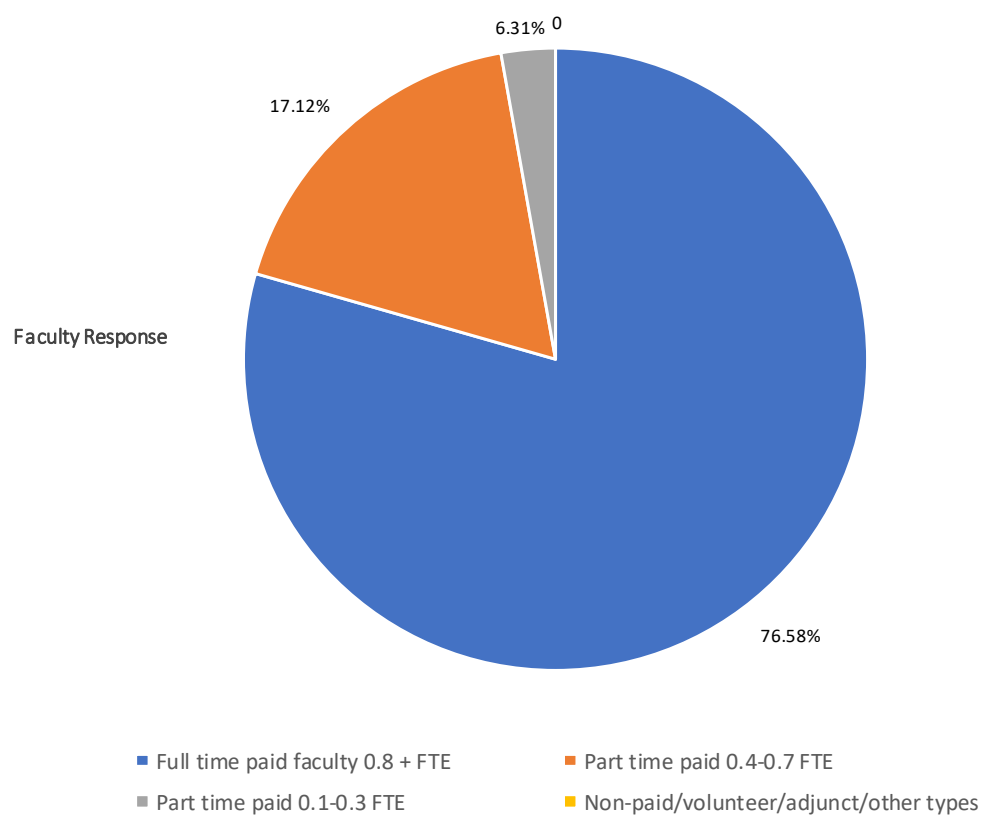


Figure 1. Study Cohort

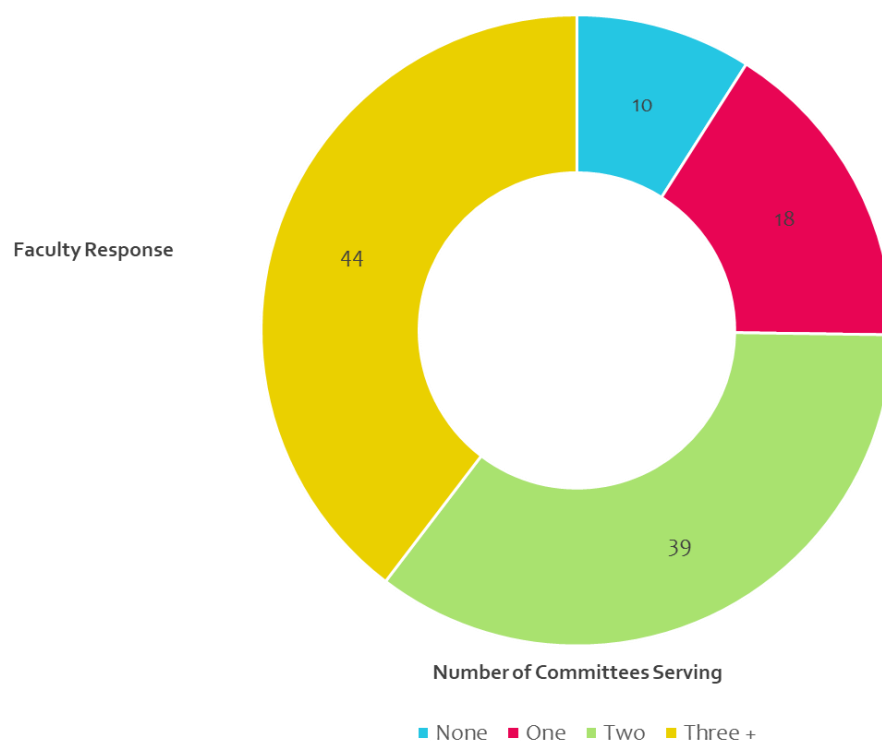


Figure 2. Number of Committees Faculty serve on.

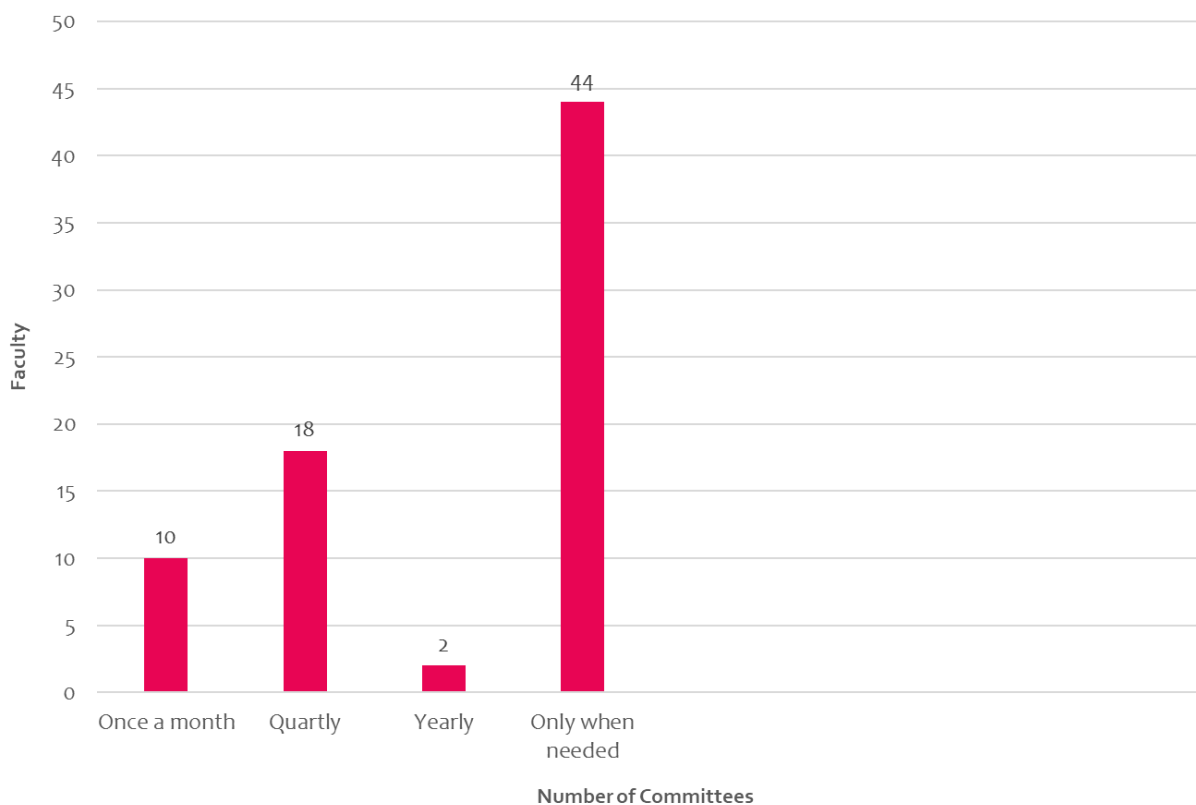


Figure 3. How often does your committee meet?

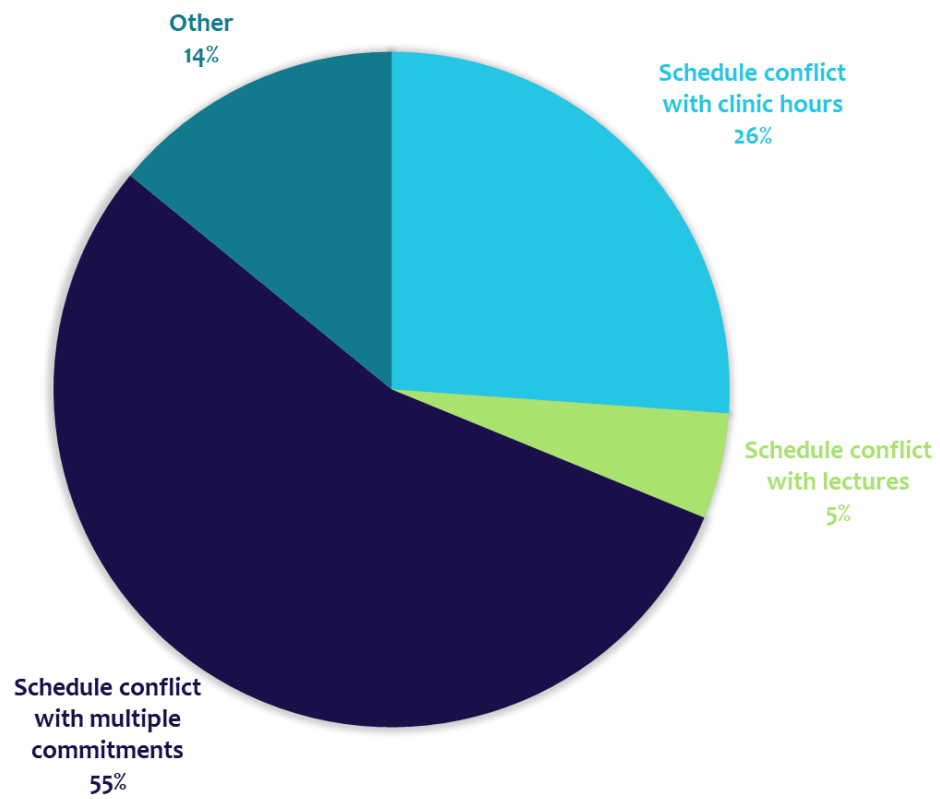


Figure 4. If you cannot attend as many committee meetings as expected, why not?

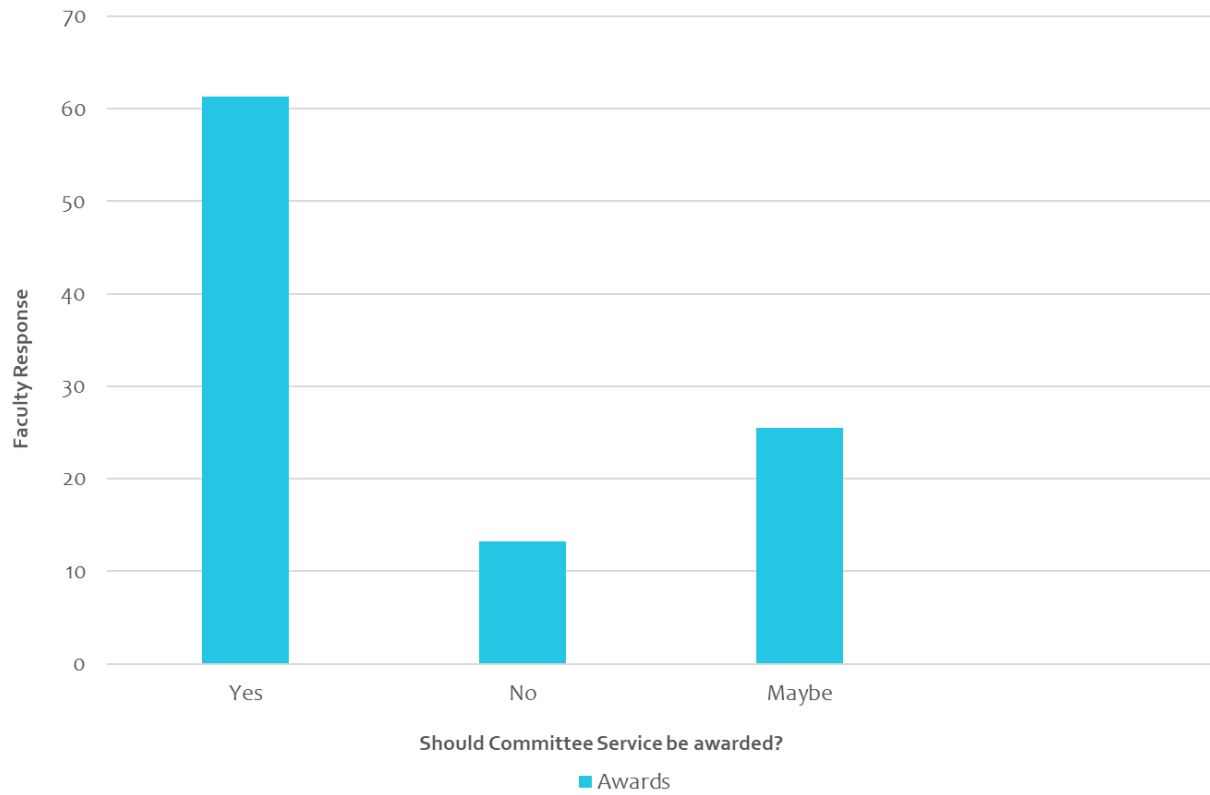


Figure 5. There are annual Dean's Excellence Awards given for other activities. Do you think service on UTSD committees or other servers (regional, national, and international services) should also be acknowledged and awarded?

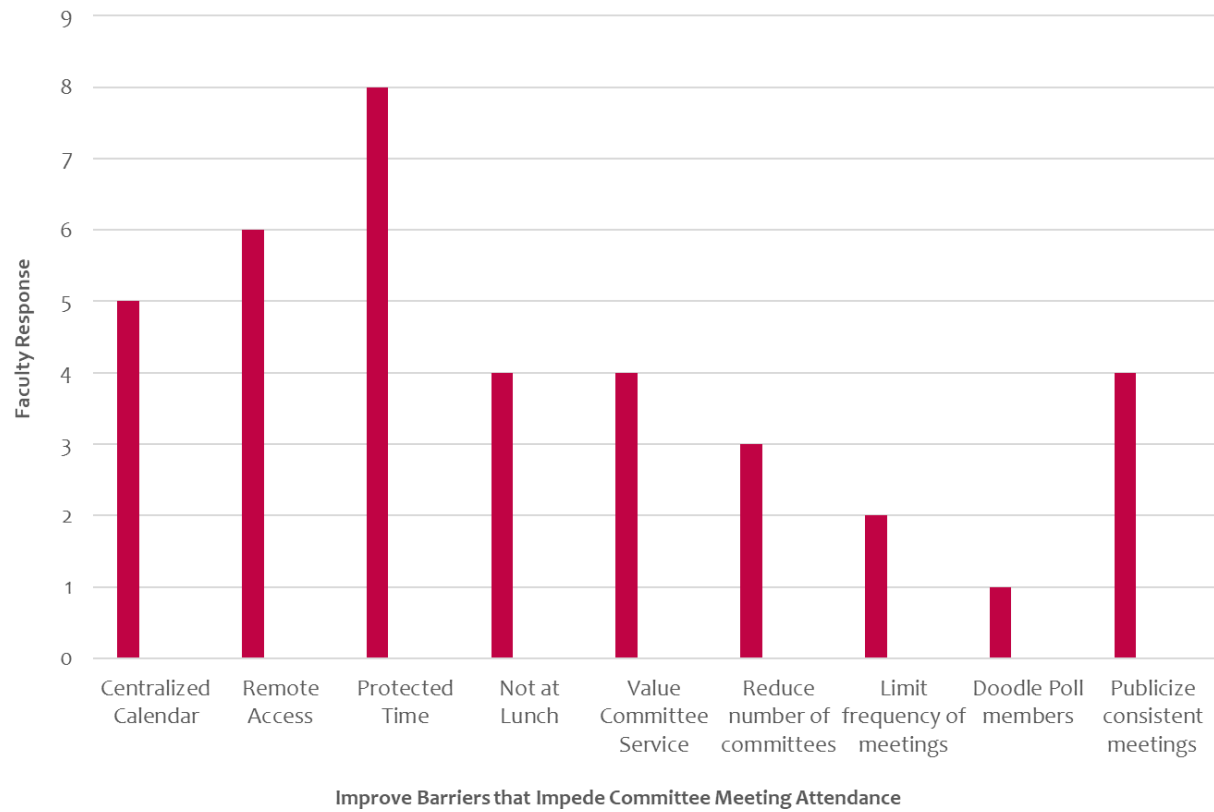


Figure 6. If you cannot attend as many committee meetings as expected how can this be improved?

Figures:

Figure 1. Study Cohort

Figure 2. Number of Committees Serving

Figure 3. How often does your committee meet?

Figure 4. If you cannot attend as many committee meetings as expected, why not?

Figure 5. Should committee service be acknowledged and awarded?

Figure 6. How can attendance at committee meetings be improved?

